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**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP TO TRANSFORM OUR LIBRARY: THE
LIBRARY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (LLDP) AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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Abstract

Against the overall conference theme of '*reinvigorating the information profession*' and in line with the '*leadership development*' conference stream, this paper overviews the national and local background and context of the decision by a Canadian research library to invest in developing and implementing its own in-house Library Leadership Development Program (LLDP).

The University Library at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) launched its inaugural LLDP (LLDP1) with 19 participants in January 2009. As a major strategic initiative LLDP1 runs until February 2010. The LLDP2 is scheduled to commence in September 2009 and the LLDP3 in March 2010. Over an eighteen month period approximately 60 library employees (or 40% of the workforce) will have participated in LLDP.

Overview

This presentation overviews three components:

- Leadership circumstances within the Canadian research libraries, with particular reference to nation-wide research conducted in 2005
- The University Library at the U of S and its Strategic Plan, with particular reference to people initiatives
- The LLDP.

I - The Canadian Information Profession

In 2005 groundbreaking research was published about Canadian libraries and the people who work in them.

*The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries*¹, also known as the 8Rs Study, delivered workplace and demographic data about the characteristics of Canadian library personnel. The

report focused on recruitment, retirement, retention, remuneration, repatriation, rejuvenation, re-accreditation and restructuring within Canadian Libraries – hence its short title: The 8Rs Study.

The publication was the culmination of nearly three years of research, which included a survey of 461 library administrators and human resource managers, a survey of over 2,200 librarians and nearly 2,000 paraprofessionals (non-MLIS staff, excluding library clerks), in-depth telephone interviews with 17 library administrators, and 3 focus group sessions. An extensive literature review and analyses of existing data was also included in the publication.

The Canadian Research Libraries sector commissioned its own follow-up work to extrapolate data from the 8Rs Study which was relevant to the member libraries within the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL). CARL was established in 1976 and its membership includes 30 Canadian university research libraries, the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), Library and Archives Canada and the Library of Parliament.

*The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries, 'The 8Rs Study': Considerations for the Canadian Association of Research Libraries*² provided CARL Directors with sector specific information. In summary:

- CARL libraries have an older workforce than other Canadian library sectors. (68% are over the age of 45)
- Opportunities for CARL librarians and paraprofessional to work in management positions are fewer than for the library community as a whole
- While CARL staff is generally satisfied with their current employment situation, and 83% of CARL senior librarians have worked in their current library for more than 10 years,

CARL libraries are more than twice as likely to have a librarian leave compared to other libraries.

In relation to the topics more closely aligned with the themes of this conference, Whitmell pointed out the following:

- CARL libraries will see a significant number of their staff retire in the next few years. These rates are higher than in most other sectors
- CARL libraries are having some difficulties in finding competencies in leadership and management
- CARL librarians are less interested and feel less qualified than librarians in other sectors to take on management and supervisory responsibilities
- CARL libraries provide adequate training in some areas but are less likely to provide training in leadership and management
- Overall, the study indicated that the longer-term picture suggests a librarian shortage.

The University Library at the U of S is a CARL member and our library demographic profile reflects the trends identified by Whitmell. As of April 2009, with a total actual employee cohort of 147, employees fall into specific age categories:

- 101 employees are Baby Boomers (born between 1944 and 1964, aged between 45 to 65 years)'
- 38 are Gen X (born between 1965 and 1980, aged between 30 and 44 years)
- 8 are Gen Y (born between 1981 to 1995, aged between 14 and 20 years).

The demographic profile shows that of the employee cohort of 147, 60 staff have 21 years or more of service. The U of S library community anticipates a significant number of retirements across all employment categories, in the next few years.

Since the publication of the 8Rs Study, the Canadian library and information services industry has continued to debate and develop action strategies around the issues raised by the study. For example, CARL established a Library Education Working Group (LEWG) to bring forward a report and recommendations in respect to education and research matters. Their report was presented in May 2008.³

In October 2008, the Canadian Library Association (CLA) convened an invitation-only summit in the nation's capital, Ottawa. The summit included over 100 representatives from national and regional associations, employers (research, public and special libraries), unions, government officials, educators, and other stakeholders in the Canadian library community. The *National Summit on Library Human Resources: Report for the Canadian Library Association*⁴ serves as a record of the meeting, and is also a guide for the Canadian library profession to carry forward the process of developing action plans that address human resource challenges, including the challenge of leadership within Canadian libraries into the 21st Century.

Individual libraries, such as the University Library at the U of S, have also taken action. Within the context of our strategic plan, there is particular attention given to 'people matters' (including leadership) through both the *Relationship and Engagement Strategy* and the *Operational Effectiveness Strategy*. Several initiatives have been developed within these strategies and later in this paper the key initiative of LLDP will be described and discussed.

This brings my remarks to focus on the second component of this presentation, namely: The University Library at the U of S and its Strategic Plan, with particular reference to the ‘people’ initiatives within the Plan.

II - The University of Saskatchewan, the City of Saskatoon and the University Library

The University of Saskatchewan (usask.ca) celebrated its centenary in 2007 and is one of the leading medical-doctoral universities in Canada. Its strategic directions and integrated plan outline a vision focused on international standards in all activities, academic pre-eminence, and a sense of place.

The U of S is home to the Canadian Light Source synchrotron, an International Vaccine Centre, and has recently established new interdisciplinary Schools of Public Health, Public Policy, and Environment and Sustainability, and significant capital building projects to revitalize Law, Veterinary Medicine, Health Sciences, and Library buildings on campus are just some of the University’s recent achievements. The University also boasts one of the most attractive campuses in Canada.

The U of S is located in the heart of the City of Saskatoon (saskatoon.ca), a city of approximately 207,000, situated on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River. The city offers a scenic accessible riverbank, many parks, a diverse and thriving economic base, a vibrant social and cultural community, and a superior quality of life. Saskatoon Shines! Saskatchewan is one of 13 Canadian provinces and territories. In 2008 CNN reported that Saskatchewan, helped by infrastructure investment and oil production was projected to lead Canada in economic growth in 2009⁵.

The University Library Strategic Plan sets an ambitious program for the transformation of library resources, facilities and services, designed to ensure continued growth into the second century of University development. Realization of the vision presents considerable challenges for the Library's leadership as well as faculty and staff-at-large (<http://library.usask.ca/>). It also provides many opportunities for innovation and change to professional practice. Above all, it requires some creative and interventionist strategies to ensure that library employees have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the challenges head-on and ensure realization of that ambitious vision. Our vision to be leaders and innovators in a dynamic information environment, collaborating with our community to create a positive experience that leads to success in learning, scholarship and practice is dependent upon a significant change in organizational culture and the development of a set of leadership skills and competency that will be achieved through LLDP.

At the heart of the transformation vision is the concept of the library as a learning organization - a place "where people continually expand their capacity to create the result they truly deserve, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn"⁶. LLDP is delivering a home-grown, customized, in-house development opportunity, directly linked to the desired and emerging organizational culture priorities that are delivered in a way that fits our working style. LLDP is a deliberate change management strategy designed to help develop library leadership competencies and behaviours based on the future directions of the library and compatibility with the emerging culture, mission and vision. It is designed to increase the probability of positive leadership skill improvement.

It is within the context of these strategies and with a focus on the LLDP that the question of leadership for transformation and the local experiences of the themes/trends identified through the 8Rs Study come together. This brings my remarks to focus on the third component of this presentation, namely: an overview of LLDP.

III – LLDP

LLDP was conceptualized against the local context of our *Relationships and Engagement Strategy* and *Operational Effectiveness Strategy*. Our *Relationships and Engagement Strategy* seeks to build and strengthen relationships and connections within the library, within the University and beyond. This Strategy sits well with the University's broader and central concept of being "An Engaged University" where "to be engaged is to have a sense of common purpose"⁷. Our *Operational Effectiveness Strategy* seeks to continuously improve operations by developing and implementing innovative solutions to advance our Strategies.

LLDP was also conceptualized against the broad national context of Canadian libraries as highlighted through the 8Rs Study. At the University Library we have direct experiences from our recruitment activities of some of the trends identified in the 8R's Study. For example, we have found it extremely difficult to fill senior leadership positions, including those with administrative responsibilities in job assignments such as Branch/Unit Head. In addition to these national trends, we also have some local factors at play at the U of S, which provide some further challenges to our recruitment of faculty librarians. These include, our location in the middle of prairie Canada; a challenging winter climate; and, some tough standards for tenure and promotion of our faculty librarians.

At the local level our Library Employee Opinion Survey (LEOS), conducted in 2006 and again in 2008 identified 'leadership' as a dimension of our organizational culture and performance needing improvement. LLDP was conceived, not because of a lack of other leadership programs, but rather in direct response to two broad strategies within the plan, as a response to the identified national challenges and other local conditions. LLDP is a local solution with national implications.

The remainder of this paper focuses on an overview of the key features of LLDP as it is unfolding from the experiences with the first cohort to undertake the program.

Getting an in-house program off the ground required us to invest considerable resources. We were greatly assisted in this by a timely and generous donation in the form of the Tom and Laura Smith Trust. Laura Smith had worked in our circulation department in the late 1960s. Following her death and to honour her memory, her husband Tom, established the Trust. The Trust is helping us to build the workforce of the 21st Century.

Other resources to support the program came from redirecting resources normally spent on sending individuals employees to external leadership programs. For example, we had had previous experience with the ARL Leadership and Career Development Program (LCDP) (<http://www.arl.org/news/pr/lcdp-12nov08.shtml>), the Triangle Leadership Program (<http://www.leadershiptriangle.com/>), Library Leaders Institute (LLI) (<http://www.whitmell.com/conference/leaders/index.htm>) and other leadership programs offered by various providers.

Over the summer of 2008 we recruited an Organizational Development Specialist with a background and experience in the design and delivery of leadership programs. Concurrently, we identified and contracted the services of an OD Consultant with deep knowledge of and experience in universities and in designing and delivering leadership programs as well as some experience of working in a consultancy role with academic libraries and library employees. Neither our OD Specialist nor our OD Consultant has library qualifications. Over the remainder of 2008, the external consultant worked with our OD Specialist to design the Program. They used internal focus groups of library employees to help inform and shape the development of the program.

LLDP1 commenced in January 2009, with a cohort of 19 participants, including librarians with administrative responsibility, some without administrative responsibilities and the Library HR Manager. LLDP1 is being delivered through six modules, each occurring over two days. Modules are held every second month. We deliberately chose to structure the learning over a period of time; rather than an intensive one-off immersion approach. This approach to delivery is intended to help reduce the resource impacts on the participants, provide time in between modules to reflect upon, practice and implement what has been learned and to provide time to complete reading or practical leadership assignments.

Unique and customized library leadership competencies and behaviours will be developed. It is anticipated that similar competencies will be identified for all levels of employee and behaviours will be selected appropriate for up to three levels of employees. Ultimately, these behaviours can be used for coaching, feedback and future 360 degree assessments.

LLDP modules take place away from the workplace at an off-site venue. This reduces the opportunities of work-distractions, provides a pleasant learning environment and fortunately is more cost-effective than using an on-site venue!

Each module covers a theme, poses key questions, facilitates thematic discussions and provides an assessment tool. For example, the first module theme was “Leadership & Relationship Building”. Key questions were: What is leadership? What is your personal style of leadership? How do you communicate as a leader? How do you as a leader develop others? The thematic discussion topic was ‘Communication’ and the assessment tool was ‘Situational Leadership’.

The first cohort developed the following working definition of leadership: leadership at the University Library is being motivated to inspire others through ones’ actions, behaviours and communication to influence them to pursue common goals or a vision, all for the common good. It is about creating hope and enthusiasm through shared values and beliefs.

In parallel with each 2-day, face-to-face module there are individual assignments and readings, trios for peer coaching and support, team leadership challenges back at work, application/information gathering/research on leadership and related topics and the opportunity to document learning by keeping a journal.

LLDP1 is comprised of modules on the following:

- Leadership and relationship building
- Team building
- Leading change

- Performance planning and accountability
- Leadership and organizational culture
- Personal mastery and organizational effectiveness

Throughout the program, participants learn through a variety of practical activities. These include their pre-set allocation to *trios* (teams of 3), their self-selection into three teams for *Leadership Action Challenges* and the writing of a personal reflections journal. The trio and leadership action challenges are unique features of LLDP and along with the one year program design really serve to not only reinforce the learning objectives but also change the way we lead in our library.

Journaling is another useful tool to encourage self reflecting and documenting thoughts, learning objectives and learning action plans and results. Most participants noted appreciation for these practical activities.

The purpose of the trios in the LLDP is to provide participants with an opportunity to receive peer coaching and mentoring which reinforces and enhances the learning objectives from the modules. The participants are placed in teams of three, directed to meet back at work on a regular basis and given questions to discuss. Trio participants are encouraged to share what they have learned in the sessions and during practical exercises with their employees and trio colleagues. They also bring employee/team issues or personal development plans to the meetings to share and discuss options with their trio colleagues. They conduct research on discussion topics and bring ideas or journal articles to the sessions for discussion. Trio participants also relate what they have learned about themselves from the leadership assessments and share ideas to further their development. The trios

also provide an ideal opportunity for participants to practice their relationship building and other leadership skills. Trio members will be changed at the halfway point in the program.

The purpose of the Leadership Action Challenges is to have the participants practice their team leadership and member skills in a real work action challenge project. The teams are formed during the second module and conclude their assignments at the sixth session. Three key strategic issues were selected by me from our Library Strategic Plan and the Library Employee Opinion Surveys. The participants then self select into three teams of five or six members each to develop action plans, with the goal to resolve real organizational leadership issues, to recommend for implementation. The modules have been designed to give the teams support and resources to help them carry out their challenges. The teams prepare project plans, review organizational material, conduct research, develop potential actions, and deliver a presentation with their recommendations. After the ideas are discussed we will be implementing some selected actions to improve leadership, engagement, accountability or other goals of the program. Action challenges cover three topics: accountability, leadership competencies and engagement.

We are monitoring progress along the way with on-going evaluation of modules and activities and there are self assessments linked to each module. Module three on Leading Change, for example, used the Strengths Finder 2.0.⁸ An anonymous, online survey of participants who completed the first module showed that 94% of participants felt the learning objective for session 1 of LLDP1 were met; 77% felt the coaching session and practices provided them with practical techniques and tips for future coaching sessions; and, 65% felt overall the session provided them with an effective opportunity to begin their leadership learning journey.

The overall success of LLDP will be measured by several key performance indicators. The Library Employee Opinion Survey (LEOS) conducted every second year, has a section specifically on leadership which can be used to measure leadership effectiveness, trends and improvements. LEOS also has sections on communications, teamwork/participation, job satisfaction and quality management, which are strongly influenced by leadership. The U of S also conducts a university-wide Employee Opinion Survey (UEOS) which is an overall measurement of employee engagement. Leadership is a primary influencer of engagement and through UEOS it is possible to track trends and improvements compared to previously conducted surveys. The UEOS survey also contains a values audit or assessment of the eight core U of S and Library values, which will make it possible to track improvements and trends. There will also be 360 degree feedback conducted on participants' leadership skills towards the end of the modules. Team assessments on team effectiveness will be conducted which will also provide anecdotal information on improvements. The senior management will also be able to detect improvements and openness in discussion and planning sessions which may be attributed to leadership development. In summary, improvements in employee engagement, job satisfaction and living our values will provide the major leadership improvement measures for leadership development.

Levels of enthusiasm levels from participants in LLDP1 are high and have been from the start. Enthusiasm levels from non-participants are also high and for this reason we have brought the scheduling of LLDP2 and LLDP3 forward and condensed the timeframe for the roll-out across the University Library.

Conclusions

LLDP is a work-in-progress but all indications thus far are very positive. LLDP is a practical step in a journey to change organizational culture, build individual and organizational leadership capacity and to address and overcome some national trends in one research library in Canada, namely, the University Library at the U of S. We hope our development and application of LLDP will help other libraries world-wide who are facing similar challenges and opportunities.

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